

VZCZCXYZ0012
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVL #0655 2241506
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 111506Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY VILNIUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2642
INFO RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0230

UNCLAS VILNIUS 000655

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM OSCE KDEM LH

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT AND PM CONDEMN VANDALISM AT JEWISH
COMMUNITY CENTER

REF: A. VILNIUS 472

¶B. STATE 60838

¶1. In the early morning of August 10, the Jewish Community Center in Vilnius and the Jewish Community Center in the city of Panevezys were vandalized with spray painted anti-Semitic symbols and other crude graffiti. The President and Prime Minister condemned the vandalism with strong statements on August 11.

¶2. President Adamkus called the vandalism "a destructive and sordid act not only against Lithuania's Jewish community but also against Lithuania as a whole. I underline that there is no, and never will be, room for hatred and instigation of discord in Lithuanian society." Adamkus said that the perpetrators must be found and called the vandalism a "harsh provocation against Lithuania."

¶3. PM Kirkilas put out a statement despite being on vacation. He noted the significant contributions that Jews of Lithuanian descent have made to Lithuania. He said that "the so called 'patriots', (by) drawing anti-Semitic slogans on the walls and flooding internet commentaries with racist phrases, in reality hate Lithuania and harm it." Acting PM, Finance Minister Rimantas Sadzius, spoke by phone with the chairman of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, Simon Alperovitch, and also reportedly told the head of the police to conduct a swift and thorough investigation.

¶4. This vandalism is the latest in a series of anti-Semitic and racist incidents, to which the GOL often has been slow to respond (ref A). Since the GOL's slow response to a March 11 skinhead march in Vilnius, Post has reminded GOL officials at several levels on several occasions that they must condemn such events swiftly and strongly (ref B). The speed with which the Prime Minister and President made their statements, and the severity of their tone, gives us hope that the message is getting through.

LEADER